

## Message Text

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17

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TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJ: LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL

REF: (A) MANILA 13094; (B) MANILA 13781

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS' CREATION OF BATASAN BAYAN (LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL - LAC) IS BEING HAILED AS "MOVE TOWARD THE NORMALIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT." NEW BODY GIVES MARCOS AN ALTERNATIVE LEGISLATURE SHOULD THERE BE SLIPPAGE IN CURRENT PLANS TO AMEND CONSTITUTION AND CREATE NEW LEGISLATURE BY MID-1977. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPT 11, GOP PUBLISHED PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 995 ESTABLISHING LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL KNOWN AS BATASAN BAYAN. PRESIDENT MARCOS HAD ANNOUNCED CREATION OF NEW BODY PREVIOUS DAY (REFTEL A). ACCORDING TO DECREE, NEW BODY WILL:

(A) ASSIST AND ADVISE PRESIDENT ON LAW MAKING FUNCTIONS;

(B) PROVIDE FORUM FOR THE CITIZENRY TO VENTILATE THEIR VIEWS ON NATIONAL ISSUES;

(C) PROVIDE FORUM FOR THE "RATIONALIZATION, UNIFICATION AND CLARIFICATION ON THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT;"

(D) PROVIDE MECHANISM FOR CONDUCTING A REVIEW OF THE "STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND EFFICIENCIES OF THE DIFFERENT BARANGAYS AND SANGGUNIANs." FIRST MEETING OF LAC IS SCHEDULED FOR SEPT 21. DECREE STIPULATES NEW BODY WILL MEET AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR. PRESIDENT WILL BE PRESIDING OFFICER AND CAN DESIGNATE ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICER. NEW BODY IS COMPRISED OF CABINET MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS WITH CABINET STATUS AND MEMBERS OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SANGGUNIAN BAYANS (118 MEMBERS). PRESIDENT CAN APPOINT OTHER REPRESENTATIVES FROM PRIVATE SECTOR AS HE DEEMS APPROPRIATE.

2. IN REPORTING LAC, GUIDED PRESS HAS EMPHASIZED THEME OF MALACANANG PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING NEW BODY, I.E., LAC IS STEP "TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT." SEPT 12 "TIMES JOURNAL" STATED: "WE ARE NOW GRADUALLY MOVING INTO THE KIND OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT WHICH THE NEW CONSTITUTION ENVISIONS," AND ARGUED "TEMPORARY CHARACTER OF THE BATASAN BAYAN DOES NOT DIMINISH ITS IMPORTANCE AS A LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL." "BULLETING TODAY" CONTENDS NEW BODY REPRESENTS MOVE TOWARD PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT SINCE IT IS COMPOSED OF CABINET MEMBERS AND UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION, MAJORITY OF CABINET COMES FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. "ORIENT NEWS" CLAIMS THAT IN CREATING LAC MARCOS "STOLE A MARCH ON THE REFERENDUM," SINCE PEOPLE WILL NOW HAVE "TRUE IDEA OF WHAT AN ADVISORY COUNCIL WILL BE AND MORE DECISIVELY ADOPT OR REJECT IT IN THE REFERENDUM." "ORIENT NEWS" POINTS OUT NEW BODY COMPOSED OF "TRIED AND TRUE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SERVED THE NATION FOR A LONG TIME." "DAILY EXPRESS" COLUMNIST VALENCIA, WHO TERMS LAC "MARCOS' BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO THE PHILIPPINES," CLAIMS "THIS LEGISLATURE WILL BE ABLE TO DO ALMOST ANTHING A REAL CONGRESS CAN, WHATEVER THE CONGRESS OR LEGISLATURE ENACTS, THE PRESIDENT WILL EMBODY IN A DECREE."

3. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF UPCOMING REFERENDUM, PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO CREATE LAC WAS SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE ALTHOUGH MRS. MARCOS TOLD AP'S ZEITLIN OVER A MONTH AGO THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE SOME SORT OF QUASI-LEGISLATURE IN PLACE BY SEPT 21. THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION THAT CREATION OF LAC CHANGES TIME TABLE MARCOS APPEARS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED FOR "POLITICAL NORMALIZATION" (PARA 2, REFTEL B). WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS NECESSARILY THE CASE ALTHOUGH IN CREATING LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY BODY, PRESIDENT ENSURES HE HAS ERSATZ LEGISLATURE SHOULD "NORMALIZATION" PROVE MORE COMPLICATED THAN HE ANTICIPATES.

THERE IS ALREADY CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT QUESTIONS  
WILL BE ASKED IN OCTOBER 16 REFERENDUM WITH NUMBER AND  
KINDS OF QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED CHANGING FROM DAY TO DAY.  
INFIGHTING BETWEEN DLGCD AND COMELEC HAS ALSO CREATED  
PROBLEMS. MARCOS HAS NOW GIVEN COMELEC COMPLETE  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFERENDUM AND MAY ISSUE DECREE  
AMENDING PD 991 TO THIS EFFECT. IN GAUGING PRESIDENT'S  
MOTIVATION FOR ESTABLISHING LAC NOW, WE THINK  
A PRIMARY CONCERN WAS INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION  
AND DESIRE TO HAVE QUASI-LEGISLATIVE BODY IN PLACE  
SOONER THAN MIDDLE OF 1977.  
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